

critical digest

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New York Theatre Week

Tonight in Samarkand-Morosco 2/16 . Bruce Becker & Robert Ellis Miller present a new play by Jacques Deval & Lorenzo Semple, Jr about a fortune teller and a woman animal trainer in a circus. Louis Jourdan, Jan Farrand head cast directed by Alan Schneider...The Wayward Saint- Cort 2/17. Courtney Burr & John Byram present new comedy-fantasy by Paul Vincent Carroll staged by John Gerstad with Paul Lukas, Liam Redmond, Pat Breslin...Bamboo Cross-Blackfriars 2/21. Blackfriars Guild presents a new drama about modern China by Theophane Lee directed by Dennis Gurney with Jenne Griffin, Jean McHenry, Tanya Chin...The Merchant of Venice-Jan Hus 2/22. Shakespearewrights' second production staged by Marjorie Hildreth.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

The Desperate Hours-Barrymore 2/10. Unanimous approval for Joseph Hayes new melodrama based on his own novel filed by NY daily critics who differed as to the degree of their warm. Cast headed by Karl Malden, Nancy Coleman, Paul Newman were applauded by most, as was tense, swift direction by Robert Montgomery. The differences developed over the depth of the characterizations. Both Times and Herald Tribune men felt some of them were on the shallow, but noisy, side. Atkinson, Times, particularly, feared the copy in the chase were mechanical, while Kerr, Herald Tribune, thought play on primitive side, as far as comment on characters was concerned. Chapman, News, cheered each performance and play itself as a stunner. Coleman, Mirror, was glad to welcome rousing theatre, good old fashioned theatre, back to Broadway. Critic has seldom seen an audience as spellbound as opening nighters. A whirlwind melodrama, with no time for breath or wonder, billed Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, who noted play is closest thing ever attempted to putting a movie on the stage. Howard Bay's sets were hailed as an important function of play's success by all. Advance reports on show were justified, states Nats, Post, who listed show as a powerful and exciting suspense melodrama, every bit as pleasantly spine tingling as the excellent novel from which it stemmed. The best seller thriller at its best, adds McClain, Journal American. Show should remain as long as the ammunition, multiple curtains and doors survive. Journal American aisle sitter predicts.

Misalliance-Equity Community Theatre 2/11/55. Sixth season of Equity Community Theatre project opened with sprightly revival of Shaw's comedy which won applause of three daily critics. Production presented at DeWitt Clinton Youth and Adult Center, will be seen at Bryant High School, Queens next week. Leon Stevens, Claude Underwood, Dorothy Love headed cast directed by Douglas Hubbard. There is enough vitality in the performance to maintain interest in the evening's extended chatter, okays Funke, Times. Shaw fans will have fun, adds Herridge, Post, though she noted production is not as good as City Center version two years ago. Cast was rated as generally pleasing. Present revival has its own regarding aspects plus the outstanding performance of Hugh Thomas as the young Socialist, joins Kerner, Women's Wear. Other shows in series are Men in White, High Button Shoes and Joan of Lorraine.

 ! Off Broadway !

Actors Studio, which has been meeting recently at ANTA Theatre building, has made arrangements for the purchase of a midtown building as its permanent home.

Three by Thurber is title of dramatization by Paul Ellwood and St. John Terrell of 3 "Mr and Mrs Monroe" stories by Thurber published in 1931 under title of "The Owl in the Attic." Trio will be presented for 3 Monday performances at Theatre De Lys by Terrell Feb 28-Mar 7 & 14.

Platform Players will present Hamlet without scenery or props at 130 W 56 Feb 16-17 as part of City Center "Friends" program. Cast headed by Jack Manning, directed by William Woodson...Deutsches Theatre to present German production of The Beaver Coat at Barbizon Plaza Feb 25 with Ludwig Donath, Grete Mosheim...The Troublemakers closed at President one week earlier than announced...The Three Sisters due at 4th St Theatre Feb 25...Shakespearean Theatre Workshop will present "An Evening of Shakespeare's Women" Feb 18 at 729 E 6... "Training for Shakespeare" course of American Theatre Wing accepting applications. Course to be taught by Eva Le Gallienne, Romney Brent, Fanny Bradshaw, Anna Sokolow, Edward Lucia.

Thieves Carnival comes closer to presenting a Jean Anouilh play suitably for a NY public than anyone else has, raves, Hawkins, WT&S, who filed a late notice on new Cherry Lane offering. Actors succeed in direct ratio to the effectiveness of their roles.. Variety mugg, Geor, also joined critical bandwagon recommending company's ensemble playing. Proscenium Productions, he noted, have put in a strong bid to make Commerce Street a lively thoroughfare.

Broadway Chapel Players will present William Alexander Percy's dramatic poem IN April Once for 9 Sunday performances at 5 PM starting Mar 15 at Broadway Congregational Church, 56th St and Broadway. Tickets free-applied for by writing.

 ! Futures !

NIGHT IN SAMARKAND	Morosco	Feb 16
WARD SAINT	Cort	Feb 17
BAMBOO CROSS	Blackfriars	Feb 21
MERCHANT VENICE	Jan Hus	Feb 22
SILK STOCKINGS	Imperial	Feb 24
THREE SISTERS	4th St	Feb 25
SHOESTRING REVUE	President	Feb 28

MASTER BUILDER	Phoenix	Mar 1
BUS STOP	Music Box	Mar 2
IN APRIL ONCE	BWAY CONG	Mar 13
WATCH BIRDIE	B.Plaza	Mar 15
3 FOR TONIGHT	Plymouth	Mar 21
CAT ON HOT TIN ROOF	Morosco	Mar 24
CHAMPAGNE COMPLEX		Apr 6
INHERIT WIND		Apr 10
ANKLES AWEIGH	Hellinger	Apr 14
THE HONEYS		Apr 14

 ! Theatre Record Comments !

"Harold Rome Plays "Fanny" album of Heritage LP was panned by Wilson, Times, as possible but hardly inspired. Composer states understanding interpretation for vocalizing technique...RCA Victor "Gertrude Lawrence" LP was approved by Times reviewer, as were Walden Records "Songs by Arthur Schwartz Vol 1" and "Gershwin Rarities Vol 2."

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 ' Green Room Department '

CITY CENTER FUTURE...There is some evidence to support the view of the retiring managing director of the NY City Center Lincoln Kirstein that the center is in danger of stifling itself through lack of enterprise, states Herald Tribune editorial. In the drama wing revivals, not originals, have been concentrated on. City Center is a prized possession of NY, it would be a bad to let it dwindle to the statue of a minor theatre on 55th, the paper concludes...Public's help in patronage and contributions are urged by Times editorial to support the City Center which has just won a \$1 year rent levy from the NYC Board of Estimate.

COLUMN TIPS...Richard Gehman alleges Plain and Fancy is a "swipe" from his Wonderful Good, hears Winchell...Sidney Kingsley is playing play for Marilyn Monroe, reports Walker.

NEWS CRITIC GUIDE...John Chapman, NY News, will lead 25 theatre fans on a European tour this summer arranged by Tom Duffy Travel Service, Syracuse, NY. Cost is \$1875 per person and leaves via KLM from NYC June 5 and returns July 14. Visits to plays, operas, musicals, and movie studios included.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Theatre people who use critics as the theatre's whipping boys forget, reminds Coleman, Mirror, high production costs, scarcity of houses, severe competition from other entertainment media, and the public's lethargy...Dolores Mann, Thieves Carnival, rated by Watts, Post, as a promising young actress...Plain and Fancy is a dandy half show, or even three quarters of a show, and one to cherish, okays Nathan, Journal American.

DRAMA MAIL BOX....Friday Drama Group of Montclair, N.J. protested via letter to Times Drama Mailbag vigorously against the theme of House of Flowers. Group also feels that production is a harmful and degrading spectacle of race relations.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Shirl Conway, Plain and Fancy, has been around NY shows since 1941 as a replacement, she told Herridge, Post. Her first Broadway role was as one of the showgirls in Eddie Cantor's Banjo Eyes... Previously she appeared in shows in London and in night clubs in New York.

 ' Pros & Cons by UNK '

Producers have leased their function of hiring and firing actors, and of giving vacations to actors, to doctors and press agents. Theatre news for past two weeks has been filled with one or another star taking off at his own whim without bothering to inform the producer. This might be the stuff Hollywood is made of, but one wonders if NY theatre fans are as interested in this sick room gossip as the editors think they are. News of more new plays and fewer ill actors would be welcome.

Thieves Carnival presents a charming, gay evening in the theatre, presented by a competent group of newcomers. The moral, or lack of moral, in the script should not worry theatre fans for long. Even the sourest of theatre patrons will soon find himself enjoying the proceeding as much as the actors onstage obviously are. The group at the Cherry Lane Theatre, which recently produced Way of the World, seem to be specializing in presenting comic plays of different styles. More power and comedy to them.

Stars in various states of illness made Page 1 headlines this week. Eartha Kitt may or may not be sick, depending upon whose story is to be believed, but it is a fact that she did not finish one performance. Her press agent said she had been ill for six weeks, the show's press agent wondered aloud if the star of Mrs. Patterson was really ill or just didn't want to go on tour with the show. Jaundice of Tyrone Power which postponed opening of The Dark is Light Enough to Feb 23 caused entire cast of show to be inoculated against infectious hepatitis. understudy, is currently in Union Memorial Hospital, Baltimore, also with jaundice. Joan Fontaine was stricken with acute bursitis of her shoulder and Mary Fickett replaced her for several performances in Tea and Sympathy.

Plays

Shows that closed include The Rainmaker, The Solid Gold Cadillac, and The Grand Prize. Dark is Light Enough to open Feb 23. The Champagne Complex will open in NYC April 6 with Donald Cook and Polly Bergen... Theatre Guild to present Louis Kronenberger's adaption of Huxley's "Les Pavés du Ciel" under title The Heavenly Twins this spring... Selden-Gottlieb will present new musical by Stein-Glickman entitled Happily Ever After.

Players

Myron McCormick signed for leading role in Ankles Aweigh... David Poleri has returned to Saint of Bleeker Street, but will be "loaned" to La Scala opera Company in April and May for 5 performances of the Menotti show. Star is reported to be suffering from bursitis... Jacqueline Kerner replaces Patty Foster in Anniversary Waltz. Carol Channing signed to star in Delilah... Robert Lubeck named drama critic and amusement editor Detroit News... Dr Saul Colin elected president of Stage and Screen Foreign Press Club.

Other Broadways

Stamford, Conn. Playhouse to open March 1 as a year round project by Maria Riva and William Riva. House is former Strand Theatre on Atlantic Street which has been closed five years... Porgy and Bess again won rave notices on its tour, this time from critics and audience at Barcelona... Variety reports several warm disputes between critics and authors in Paris has resulted in better houses at the controversial plays.

Theatre Film Notes

Debbie Reynolds will star in MGM production of "The Tender Trap"... French producers of The Crucible, which currently stars Yves Montand, are planning to produce film of Arthur Miller play with sound tracks in 3 languages-French-English-German.

Theatre Record Notes

Everyman recorded by Caedman Records with Burgess Meredith in title role ... Plain and Fancy original cast album by Capital Records out last Sunday.

Theatre TV Notes

Emperor Jones will be revived by NBC TV Kraft Feb 23... Peter Pan two hour production on NBC TV March 7 will feature current cast headed by Mary Martin. Show will start at 7 30 PM... Harry Belafonte readying 15 minute TV Film series entitled "Belafonte Performs"... William Saroyan signed by NBC Radio to write and read a series of pieces for special Sunday night radio shows of network, first being a discussion of Carl Sandberg and Bernard Shaw... Mike Ellis has added Sunday WPTZ-TV Philadelphia program "Stand-By Broadway" talent show.

